
PROMISING PRACTICES IN STATE SURVEY AGENCIES

Team-Based Scheduling Practices

Idaho

Summary

The Idaho Bureau of Facility Standards implemented a team-based approach to scheduling long-term care surveys in the 1990s as a strategy to improve surveyor retention and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the survey scheduling process, formerly a supervisory responsibility. The agency utilizes variable team composition for each survey, with surveyors and supervisors assembling monthly to schedule surveys and assign survey teams for the upcoming month.

Introduction

This report describes the structure and functioning of Idaho's team-based scheduling practice, its impact, and lessons learned that might benefit other agencies considering implementing a team-based approach to scheduling surveys. The information presented is based on interviews with agency management staff.

Background

Supervisors initiated the transition to team-based scheduling to increase surveyor influence over the location and timing of survey assignments, with the goal of increasing job satisfaction and retention. Team-based scheduling also was intended to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the scheduling process by involving the multiple perspectives of a larger group as a mechanism to ensure attention to all scheduling variables and minimize the need to revise the schedule.

Intervention

Long term care surveyors include 13 full-time positions and two to four temporary, part-time staff, with all surveyors based in the central office in Boise. Survey team composition varies for each survey. Surveys typically are scheduled for alternate weeks each month, referred to as "out-weeks", so that all teams are conducting on-site surveys during the same weeks.

Surveyors meet midmonth to schedule surveys for the subsequent month. Surveyors are required to submit leave requests to supervisors by the 10th of the month prior to the requested leave, to facilitate scheduling decisions. Prior to the scheduling meeting, the supervisors e-mail an agenda to all surveyors, with information on the designated survey weeks and the facilities to be surveyed during each out-week.

The first 45 to 60 minutes of the monthly team meeting is dedicated to scheduling. During this time, the facilities for each out-week are listed on the blackboard and team leaders and team members are noted for each survey, as determined by group discussion. Supervisors participate in the scheduling meeting and may intervene to ensure that each survey team includes an effective mix of clinical disciplines, and experienced and newer surveyors. Supervisors also assist with considering facility-specific factors to ensure that teams are suited to address potential challenges.

Impact

The team-based scheduling approach has empowered surveyors to influence their work environment, in terms of participating in surveys in preferred locations (whether complementary to personal travel plans or simply by personal preference), avoiding overnight travel to accommodate personal commitments (e.g., doctor's appointment, evening commitment), and working with particularly compatible colleagues.

Supervisors are comfortable with team-based scheduling and perceive that the approach has reduced friction among surveyors, strengthened teamwork, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced morale. Agency management also believe that retention rates have been positively affected.

The team-based scheduling practice has reduced supervisor time dedicated to scheduling and results in a schedule that more effectively accommodates surveyors' preferences and personal commitments, and necessitates fewer revisions.

Lessons Learned

Agency management recommend obtaining surveyor leave requests for the coming period

well in advance of the scheduling meeting, to allow accurate planning in terms of the number of surveyors and facility size for each out-week.

The agency has found that team-based scheduling can be implemented effectively without permanent surveyor teams, at least in their circumstance of a relatively small number of surveyors, based out of a single office.

Contact Information

For more information about the team-based scheduling practice at the Idaho Bureau of Facility Standards, please contact Loretta Todd, Co-Supervisor, Long Term Care Program, or Lorene Kayser, Co-Supervisor, Long Term Care Program at 208/334-6626 or by e-mail at ToddL@idhw.state.id.us or KayserL@idhw.state.id.us.

This document is part of an issue brief on team-based scheduling practices in state survey agencies. The issue brief is one of a series by the Division of Health Care Policy and Research, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, for the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) highlighting promising practices in state survey agencies. The entire series is available online at CMS' Website, <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SurvCertPromPractProj>. The issue briefs are intended to share information about practices used in state survey agencies and are not an endorsement of any practice.